

King of the Underworld by RJ Kane

Chapter 268

Chapter Two Hundred Sixty-Eight

Adrik

Once Trino and I ended the call, we all stood in stunned silence for a few moments. Not only had Dario dropped heavy information on us, but Sephie and Misha had seen what happened to Trino, seemingly as it was happening. How?

Sephie was still standing next to me, tucked into my side like she was made for that spot. I had a tight hold of her, feeling even more protective than usual of her. I'd lost count of how many times I'd told her that she was the most amazing woman I'd ever known, but she continued to raise the bar on that standard. I found myself curious to see what else she could do.

I glanced at Misha, who was still stunned at what had happened. He had his hands on his hips and was staring at the floor in front of him like he wasn't sure what to do or say.

"Misha, how does your gut instinct usually work? Can you normally see things as they happen?" I asked him.

He snapped back to reality when I called his name. He looked to me, then to Sephie, then back to me. "I get snapshots of what's going to happen, but it's like still pictures. When Sephie was holding my hands, it was a full-on movie. In real-time, apparently." He still looked stunned and almost baffled at what had happened. We all were, really.

I looked down at Sephie, who looked back at me. "Don't look at me. I have no explanation," she said. She looked just as stunned as Misha did.

I caught Ivan's eye, then looked back at Misha. "If I've learned anything from Sephie, it's that she shows you what your potential is," I said. "She shows you how to get to the next level, if you will. Think of her like the Game Master."

She looked up at me, smiling. "Calling me the Game Master implies I know what the hell this game is that's happening with all of us. I'm in the dark just as much as the rest of you."

"I think you're selling yourself short, spider monkey. You might not be completely conscious of what's happening, but you feel literally everything around you. I could tell you were anxious before Boss called Trino. It got worse when he didn't answer. It got worse still when Misha had the same reaction. You know more than you think you do, Sephie," Andrei said. Sephie looked at Andrei, but didn't know how to respond. She was chewing on her bottom lip; her hands were starting to fidget as well.

"I saw her eyes go dark this time when she was talking to Dario, too," Ivan said. Stephen nodded beside him. "I did too," he said.

I felt her anger rise quickly at the mention of the conversation with Dario, but she had it under control just as quickly as it appeared. She looked at Ivan.

"Holy sh it, I see it now," Viktor said. Sephie looked to me quickly, confused. "Blink, love," I said, kissing her temple. Her eyes were as dark as I'd seen them, but she felt completely calm to me. She closed her eyes, taking a deep breath. I got hit with a sudden feeling of panic that I knew wasn't mine. When she opened her eyes and looked to me for confirmation they were normal again, I could see the fear in her eyes.

"What the f**k is happening to me?" she asked quietly. Her feeling of panic was growing. She was an expert at controlling her anger, but her fear was clearly a different story. She was losing control quickly. I wrapped my arms around her, pulling her tight against me. She clung to me like I was her lifeline to reality.

"Princess, you joked that your eyes going dark was your villain origin story, but I think it's exactly the opposite. I think it's your hero origin story. We may not know what happened just now, but you're doing what you always do- making sure that people you care about are taken care of. That's hero behavior," Ivan said. She took a deep breath, but didn't loosen her grip on me. Her face was still buried in my chest.

"Didn't your dad tell you that you were here to help each one of us with something important?" I asked her, trying to coax her head away from my chest. Not that I minded her body pressed against mine. I just didn't want her to be scared. She nodded her head.

"He did?" Misha asked. She nodded again, but this time she looked up at me. The look of fear was slowly disappearing. She turned so she could look at Misha, but she kept my arms wrapped tightly around her.

"He told me I was supposed to help you develop your gift, my adorable Russian guardian," she said, looking at Misha. She then looked at Andrei. "Bubba, we're apparently here to make each other better. It's why you're so good at pushing me and training me to be better and why I'm constantly reminding you of how awesome you are." Andrei's wide smile stretched across his face. She looked at Stephen and said, "Yoden, I was supposed to show you how much better life can be when you just decide to be yourself." Stephen's cheeks blushed, as he ran his hand through his hair. "And Papa Bear," she said, looking at Viktor. "I was supposed to help you get your confidence back. You do a very good job of hiding it from everyone else, but I know how debilitating it was becoming for you since you lost your wife." Viktor looked at her, smiling. She really had helped him feel much more confident since she'd come into our lives. I hadn't noticed it much before Sephie, but Viktor was back to the way he was when I first met him. He'd lost his light before Sephie, but she was the spark he needed to remember who he was and how great he was at his job.

"What about Ivan?" Misha asked. Sephie looked at Ivan. I could tell by the look on his face that she was smiling at him. His face always got softer when she smiled at him. She glanced up at me and held my gaze. She was silently asking my thoughts on whether she should tell them everything. I nodded once.

She sighed, then walked to Ivan. "Ivan and I have a special deal. My dad explained it like this: there are different types of soulmates. Adrik and I are meant to find each other and fall in love over and over again in many lifetimes. I don't think any of you are surprised by that," she said, laughing. "I don't know how many lifetimes I've spent with the rest of you, but Ivan gets the role of my protector in each one. He proved he was ready the day Sal's guys tried to grab me when he used his body to shield me from the impact of the truck that hit us." She had put her arms around his waist as she was talking, with her head resting on his shoulder. He held her tightly, kissing the top of her head.

"I nominate Stephen to document each future version of us that he meets in his one extremely long lifetime," Misha said. The smile that Sephie gave him was enough to make the room twice as bright. She squeezed Ivan then ran to Misha, laughing. He picked her up and swung her around. Her squeal was music to my ears.

"I love that you're as much of a dork as I am, Misha," she said as he set her down.

"He definitely wasn't this much of a dork before you came along. You brought it to the surface," Andrei said, laughing. "Just like you did with the rest of us."

"I mean, I'll apologize if you don't like it, but I happen to love it. You're all much more entertaining this way," she said, walking back to me.

"Don't you dare apologize for it," I said, pulling her to me forcefully causing her to giggle as she wrapped her arms around my neck. She pressed her lips to mine, still laughing against my lips.

"Come on, I'll get started on dinner," she said, pulling me back toward the kitchen.

"We can order takeout, sestrichka. It's been a long day for everyone." Viktor said.

"Papa Bear, if you haven't figured out by now, feeding you is how I show all of you just how much I love you," she said, her sweet smile on her face.

Andrei pushed his stomach out to give himself a belly. "So Much Love," he said, as he rubbed his pretend belly.